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ABSTRACT

A brief overview is presented in this paper of the history of using cooperating teachers to supervise student teachers and the concerns that have been shown over the years about their qualifications. Results are reported of a recent survey of 44 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico which sought information on legal requirements for cooperating teachers. There appeared to be no uniformity among requirements for the teachers who guide student teachers. Reform in this area is needed as the United States enters the 21st century. (JD)

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Education into the 21st Century: Looking at Cooperating Teacher Educators

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Education into the 21st Century:

Looking at Cooperating Teacher Educators

New challenges for providing excellence in teacher training await educators in the 21st century. As we look critically at the future of teacher training, an examination of the role of cooperating teachers in the past may be important. In Mead's (1930) account of the origins of student teaching, two types of activities preceded student teaching: teacher guilds and tutors. In the 16th century, teachers in Germany formed themselves into guilds much like other tradesmen (Robbins, 1912). In order to become a teacher, young persons apprenticed themselves to master teachers, learning the art of teaching through observation and practice. Another practice that likely gave rise to practice teaching was the use of older students as tutors for younger students.

Early in the 1800's, Americans began to develop a formalized system for training teachers. A carefully planned program of practice teaching was carried out by the Oswego schools in New York under the supervision of Edward A. Sheldon (Dearborn, 1925). Sheldon organized a rigorous system of practice teaching in which teachers-in-training spent considerable time learning the subject matter and receiving training in methods of teaching after school. A debate concerning the value of practice teaching took place at the First Annual Convention of the American Normal School Association in 1859 (Armentrout, 1927). There was considerable discussion as to whether practice teaching was necessary training. Parents were concerned about having their children "practiced upon" by inexperienced teachers (Williams, 1942). Two of the central issues debated in the early model schools (which are still alive and well today) were: (1) who should supervise the student teacher, a special critic teacher or regular faculty member, and (2) what institution should be

responsible for the practice school, the normal school or the public schools. According to Harper (1939) these questions were not decided.

Yearbooks of the Association for Student Teaching (AST) reveal a sustained concern for effective supervision of student teachers over the years. Minutes from the National Association of Directors of Supervised Student Teaching record as early as 1922 the approval of this resolution: "Critic teachers as well as supervisors and directors of student participation should have had training in laboratory departments or similar experiences." Little attention was given to inservice preparation, however, before 1934. This perhaps is explained by the fact that before this time, most student teaching was done in campus laboratory schools whose teachers were master teachers. By 1934, many large universities were making extended use of the public schools and were providing inservice programs for public school supervisors.

The first yearbook to give detailed attention to the inservice education of supervising teachers appeared in 1954. It indicated the need for both formal and informal preparation of supervising teachers for their new responsibilities. Curtis and Tanruther (1954) examined the types of organization used for inservice programs and found that formal devices - graduate courses and seminars - were reported as operating in more than 40 percent of the responding institutions. Informal devices - cooperatively planned study groups, conferences for groups of supervisors, workshops, and individual conferences - were reported to be used widely in all cooperating systems. Some colleges provided handbooks for guiding supervising teachers as a supplement to the informal conferences and workshops provided.

In 1954, ten states had universities and colleges which offered credit course work for supervisors of student teachers. Lindsay (1954) called for the Association for Student Teaching to begin to prepare competent supervisors

of student teaching by a guided program of laboratory-type experiences for already certified teachers who desired to become specialized in this aspect of teacher education.

The 1959 yearbook for the AST sounded the first call for a structured and eventually mandated requirement that supervising teachers be specifically prepared for the important work of student teacher supervision. In 1961 the association returned to a consideration of the qualifications of the supervising teacher. The following "essential compentencies" were identified: 1) scholarly control of knowledge; 2) expertness in the teaching-learning process; 3) skill in decision-making; and 4) insight into one's self as a professional.

A number of studies in recent years have focused attention on the importance of the cooperating teacher's role in teacher preparation. James Bryant Conant (1963) prepared a classic report, The Education of American Teachers. Conant formulated a variety of ideas concerning the administration and supervision of student teachers. He proposed the development of state-approved practice teaching arrangements and urged the state government to establish guidelines and criteria for the certification of practice teachers.

One of the most notable ideas offered by Conant was the improved status of the supervisory personnel in student teaching. Within the public schools, he suggested that cooperating teachers be selected who are "known to school officials, collegiate faculty and the state department as highly competent teacher(s) both of classroom pupils and student teachers." Conant also went on to state, "cooperating teachers should have time freed to aid student teachers; and should also have increased compensation in recognition of added responsibility and special talent."

Stell (1976) conducted a study to determine the extensiveness and form of credentialing for cooperating teachers. A survey instrument was designed and mailed to the Director of Teacher Education and Certification at each State Department of Education in 49 states and the District of Columbia. The survey asked if states had formal credentialing for supervising teachers, and if not, whether they planned for such in the future. It was found that 44 states had no formal credentialing. Louisiana required a teaching certificate, three years of successful teaching, and a masters degree with three hours of supervision of student teaching. Georgia, North Carolina and West Virginia all have requirements involving teacher certification and a course in supervision of student teaching. Houston (1976) led a task force in Texas to investigate credentialing of school-based teacher educators. After studying the need for credentialing, the task force concluded that there should be a credentialing system for school-based teacher educators, and recommended that one be established. Haberman and Harris (1982) studied the legal requirements for cooperating teachers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Twenty-four of the 50 states reported that they had no legal requirements; two required only teacher certification; 16 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia required some teaching experience (generally two or three years of teaching); nine states and Puerto Rico required a program or course related to the supervision of students; and three states required a masters degree. West Virginia and Kentucky had the most extensive certification programs involving various levels of certification which required increasing years of teaching and course work.

In examining the role of cooperating teachers in the past, we observe a strengthening of standards of preparation through the years. States have set up a variety of certification programs for teachers who want to be specialized

in this area. Recent surveys of the states show, however, that not all of the states have legal requirements for cooperating teachers.

In this study surveys were mailed to all states, as well as to Washington D.C., and to the protectorates of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Responses were received from forty-four states, Washington D.C., and from Puerto Rico. Survey forms from three other states were received, but the responses were inadequate or unusable.

Across the United States, of 44 states reporting, twelve report no state level requirements for cooperating teachers. The decision regarding who should fulfill these important positions are left to the individual districts or state institutions. These states are Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Three states, Colorado, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island require only professional certification. Twenty-three other states require professional certification for cooperating teachers, along with certain other requirements. Only four states, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, and Louisiana, require that cooperating teachers hold a master's level degree, and Connecticut requires 30 hours beyond the bachelor's degree. Five states, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Dakota, and Ohio, as well as the protecate Puerto Rico, require that cooperating teachers take a university course in the supervision of student teaching. Eight states require a special training program for cooperating teachers: California, Connecticut, Georgia, Mississippi, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Virginia, as does Washington D.C. These training programs deal primarily with teaching competencies and/or assessment of teaching competencies.

Twenty-eight states, as well as Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, require that their cooperating teachers have experience teaching in the area of supervision. This experience requirement ranges from simply "experience" in

the area of supervision, to a specified number of years from two to five. Eighteen states responding require three years of experience.

Recommendation by public school administrators and/or university personnel is required in ten states: Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Virginia.

In summary, there appears to be no uniformity among requirements for the teachers who guide our pre-service teachers in the most important learning experience in their teacher training program. Teachers of children in grades K-12 must be certified in their areas; supervisors of teachers and principals must hold certification in their areas of expertise; and teachers at the college level must meet specific qualifications. Cooperating teachers who train our future teachers should meet a uniform basic level of skill attainment. Concerned teacher educators must bring about reform in this area as we enter the 21st century.

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